[English]

Joint Venture in Field of Trade with Pakistan

450. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT:
SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a great demand for Indian Tyres in Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether any delegation has visited Pakistan in this regard, to explore avenues of joint venture in several fields of trade; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir, There is a good demand for Indian Tyres in Pakistan.

(b) and (c) A trade delegation of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which had representatives from the Indian Tyre Industry also, visited Pakistan from 28th July to 2nd August, 1997. The delegation visited Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi, and attended meetings with Pakistani business & trade representatives who are stated to have showed considerable enthusiasm in their interactions with the Indian delegation supporting close trade relations with India while at the same time stressing the need to protect the interest of the Pakistani manufacturers. In respect of the Tyre Industry, however, the emphasis was more on increasing exports of tyres to Pakistan rather than on joint ventures in this sector.

Rice Export

451. SHRI SURESH R. JADHAV : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that Indian rice export has been affected badly due to devaluation of ASEAN currencies in the recent past keeping in view that ASEAN countries are the main competitors of India in rice export; and

(b) if so, the steps take by the Government to protect the interests of Indian rice exporters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) It is not possible to assess the impact of devaluation of ASEAN currencies on rice exports on account of different varieties traded, variations in quality and additional expenditure incurred in grading and packaging.

(b) Some of the steps taken to enhance exports of rice include participation in international trade fairs; arranging buyer-seller meets; conducting market development compaigns; and providing assistance for product development.

[Translation]

Piparwar Project

452. SHRI MAHABIR LAL BISHVAKARMA : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of coal produced in Piparwar project of Bihar during 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94; and

(b) the amount spent under Piparwar project for the development of adjoining area during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) and (b) The quantum of coal produced in Piparwar project under Central Coalfields Limited (Bihar) and amount spent for the community development in adjoining areas of the project during 1990–91 to 1993–94 are as under:—

Year	Coal produced (million tonnes)	Amount spent on community development (Rs. in lakhs)
1990–91	0.73	1.91
1991–92	1.08	4.13
1992–93	2.62	3.31
1993–94	4.24	5.86

Excise Duty on Stone Industry

453. PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the stone industry is facing a serious crisis due to excise duty levied on it in the last budget, thus treating it at par with the marble-stone;

(b) the rate at which the excise duty has been increased in respect of cutting, smoothening and finishing of stone respectively in the Stone Industry during the last three years;

(c) whether the Government have received various memoranda from stone traders, organisations and peoples representatives of Rajasthan for reducing excise duty;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government had sent a team of tax experts to ascertain the factual position of the Stone Industry in this regard and whether the Government has also given assurance in the House for taking necessary action; and

(f) if so, the report of the said team of tax experts and the efforts being made by the Government to save the Stone Industry in the context of the above report?